

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks on Infrastructure Workforce Training Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters

November 2, 2022

The President. Please, sit down. I think you can do anything. [*Laughter*] That was impressive.

And before I begin, I want to remind some folks here that, you know, when I started to run for the Presidency this time, the suggestion was: "Biden was too green. He'd never get unions to stick with him."

One of the first guys I called was Lonnie. And before I announced the detail of all my program, we sat down for hours—hours, on more than one day. And Lonnie became convinced—was convinced—not by me, but convinced by circumstance—that the future of labor was in the future—was about what we have to do to deal with climate, with advanced manufacturing; that we have to do to deal with things like those little computer chips that in fact mobilize everything we do, from your washing machine to your automobile to our weapon systems. It's amazing.

And Lonnie jumped on. And a lot of you had already come along, a lot of the unions had come along, but everybody came along. Because finally, we're—we reached the point with the help of the IBEW and the carpenters, so many others—so many others—that, you know, the future is about the future.

And one of the reasons I want to make it clear that I talk about unions all the time is, this young woman has been at an apprentice program for 4 years—she'd already gone to college—4 years. People think that you just walk in and say, "I want to be a electrician," and you get hired—you get a job, you get hired, and you're at work in a couple days.

This is—we have the best trained workers in the world—in the world. And that's not hyperbole. And I mean this—and I think American businesses are coming to understand this and American industry—is that, you know, it costs more to hire a union worker than a nonunion worker. But guess what? It costs you less over time, because you have the best product for what—that you're paying for.

And so, anyway, I just want to thank you, Lonnie and all the union presidents that are here, for stepping up. It wasn't easy to step up as boldly as you—I really mean it. I've always had the support of the IBEW, but never on this—never so aggressively on dealing with the things we're talking about.

There are three major, major pieces of legislation that already created 700,000 manufacturing jobs and are going to create literally several million more. And that is the—the infrastructure bill, which, in fact—do everything from highways and bridges to broadband to clean water, lead pipes—I mean, across the board.

And then we came along with a little thing that everybody wondered what it was—we talked about the CHIPS and Science Act. Well, guess what? We have American and non-American business investing literally several trillion, billion—I mean, billion—hundreds of billions of dollars. Because it's the future. Every single thing that your kids, when you're—they're your age—or buying, it's going require a computer chip.

We invented them. We invented them. We're the ones who advanced them—the United States of America. Yet we lost the market because we didn't invest. We didn't invest in America.

And we came along, and, with the help of all of you in this room, we got strong support, and we invested. And all the way from—I was just up at IBM, up in Upstate New York, and then I went to—over to Syracuse, New York. We're talking just those two outfits are several hundred billion dollars over time.

So, look, this is—I am—Lonnie has heard me say this: I am optimistic. I'm truly optimistic because of your generation.

You know, speaking to labor, it's always been great to work with you all. And last year, we signed the historic infrastructure law, a once-in-a-generation investment in roads, bridges, railroads, airports, high-speed internet, clean air, clean water, clean energy future.

I signed that—I signed that so that the—that we could be positioned to win the competition of the second quarter of the 21st century. We—to do that, we had to make sure the law would rebuild all of America, lift us all up—workers—and, in the process of this, with products that are made in America.

And guess what? We didn't stop there. As I said, we passed the CHIPS and Science Act. As a result, companies are investing hundreds of billions of dollars, tens of thousands of jobs. And by the way, you know what these jobs are going to be? And, for example, the ones down in—for Intel, when they get these factories built or up—you've got one—I'm going to leave somebody out, so I won't name them all. But you know, noncollege—without a college degree—120,000 bucks a year. A hundred and twenty thousand dollars a year.

In August, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act, investing \$360 billion in clean energy. And there'll be more to come, I believe. We put Americans to work making solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars.

By the way, I was in a part of Ohio looking at the facilities where they're training people on wind turbines. You know, we have the blades of wind turbines now that are 102—4—104 yards long. Longer than a football field. Not a joke. Not a joke. Wind energy, solar energy is cheaper than oil and gas and coal. Cheaper.

Look, we're—you know, we've already created, as I've said, 700,000 new manufacturing jobs. That's what today is about.

Back in June, we launched the nationwide Talent Pipeline Challenge. And I'll tell you, it was designed to ensure that workers across the country, especially those in—historically underrepresented in infrastructure jobs, could take advantage of the job growth in three sectors that we're going to—booming because of what we're going to do because of the infrastructure law: high-speed internet, construction, electrification of all those new electric vehicles and batteries, improvements to the electric grid. The infrastructure law is going to provide \$800 billion [million]* in workforce development.

And then we went out and asked employers and unions to get in the deal—educational institutions; State and local, Tribal and Territorial governments; and philanthropic organizations—to join us to make tangible commitments to build a 21st-century workforce; commitments to prepare women, people of color, underserved populations; good-paying, high-quality jobs in those three sectors.

Today I'm proud to announce that more than 350 organizations across the country, nearly 50 States and Territories, have responded to my call and committed to the challenge. Companies—many of you are here—are forging partnerships with unions, community colleges, local nonprofits to create apprenticeships that train workers to develop the necessary skills. It's the first

* White House correction.

time we have high-paying jobs and not enough people to do them. *[Laughter]* Nice thing, isn't it? It's a nice problem to have. We're solving it quickly.

Employers are providing support services like help with childcare and transportation so workers with kids who are the only parents at home don't have to choose between taking care of their families and completing their training or taking a better paying job.

Colleges are creating new infrastructure academies and preparing—partnering with companies to expand apprentice and preapprentice programs to match the trainees with mentors to provide on-the-job experience. You know, a lot of community colleges, particularly—my wife says community colleges are the best kept secret in America. I wonder why she says that. *[Laughter]* She's still teaching.

But my point is that, you know, what happened was: What do you need in the community? Go to the community college. Tell them. They'll set up a training program with you. For—I mean, it's a little more complicated, but that's the essence of it. And philanthropies are now providing more than \$70 million of new commitments so far to recruit talent in underrepresented communities.

I made a commitment: We're not going to leave anybody behind. And I really mean it. Many of the organizations that are here with us today—Communication Workers of America are partnering with AT&T and Corning to create training programs for broadband technicians.

United Airlines and the Teamsters announced a new apprenticeship for airline mechanics. The Center for Energy Workforce Development and Urban League are working with the IBEW right now to train thousands of workers to build and maintain charging infrastructure for electric vehicles all across the country.

And by the way, in your home, you know, the batteries that we have now—and they're getting more and more sophisticated. You know, a lightning storm takes out all the electricity in the house. Guess what? You can plug your car into the house and make it light up. *[Laughter]* You think I'm joking? *[Laughter]* It's a little simplistic, but literally, you can—literally you can. Whoa. *[Laughter]* This summer—*[laughter]*. It really is kind of exciting. I get a little—*[applause]*.

This summer, Jill, my wife, joined the Labor Secretary, Marty Walsh, at a electrical substation in Boston, where Bunker Hill Community College students have paid internships at a public utility company to prepare them for union jobs that support American electric grid infrastructure. That's happening now.

You know, we just did a walk through of several union-led demonstrations in the dining room. We had a bricklayer. I didn't want the cement to get in the salads, but you know, it may happen. *[Laughter]* He was good though; he didn't drop any.

Anyway, all kidding aside, the trainings that these organizations provide are truly state-of-the-art. I saw workers who trained, both in person and virtually, through virtual reality tools to create brick-and-mortar structures—walls, dams, buildings; weld materials for roads, bridges, airports; and to wire electrical boxes for electric vehicle charging stations.

It matters, but it also provides really good-paying jobs where America will lead the world again in manufacturing. I don't know where it's written that says we can't be the manufacturing capital of the world again.

Look, for most of the 20th century, America led the world because we invested in ourselves. But somewhere along the way—not a joke—somewhere along the way, we stopped investing in ourselves. Jobs were going overseas. Now we're sending products overseas—*[laughter]*—not jobs.

Because our adversaries have been closing the gap. But with this Talent Pipeline Challenge, these partnerships, we're regaining the momentum and taking back our competitive edge. And the United States is going to win.

In addition to the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act is the biggest investment ever in climate—ever, ever, ever in the history of the world in climate—creating jobs of the future so workers and small businesses lead the transition to a clean energy economy, something we owe our children and our grandchildren beyond measure.

The CHIPS and Science Act has supercharged efforts to make semiconductors and small computer chips that power our everyday lives and every aspect of life. It's going to grow and grow and grow. And we're doing it the right way: centered around workers and communities, bringing everybody along.

You know, it's part of the economic vision I ran on, and I've been carrying it out as soon as I came to office with the help of people in this room, rebuilding our economy from the bottom up and the middle out. I'm so sick and tired of trickle-down economics. I don't remember my dad ever feeling that trickle on his head. *[Laughter]*

But seriously. And by the way, businesses are coming along. One of the things that is happening is that, you know, when you—when the middle class grows—and it's growing—and the poor have a ladder up and the wealthy still do very, very well. No one gets hurt. No one gets hurt.

The economy that creates good-paying jobs—union jobs, high-quality jobs—that don't require college degrees. The economy that works for everybody through bold actions like this one, and we're taking that vision to a reality. This is what it looks like when America comes together to get something done.

So let me close with this, because I don't want to get started, because I'm really excited about all this. *[Laughter]* The country has been through a tough 4 or 5 years, and folks are still hurting. Granted that we inherited a 6.5-percent unemployment rate; it's down to 3.5 percent. But guess what? Inflation is still hurting people, but we're making real progress. We're reasserting ourselves as a nation.

That's why, when I look at—out at everyone here and across the country, I'm more optimistic about the future than I ever have been. Ever in my career, I've been more optimistic than today. We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. There's nothing—and I mean this sincerely from the bottom of my heart—there's nothing—nothing we cannot do—nothing—when we do it together. So that's my goal: to bring us together to get more done.

And I look in this room, and there's business, labor, apprentices. There's lot of good folks all understanding that we can outcompete the rest of the world like we always did in the past. There's nothing beyond our capacity—nothing, nothing, nothing.

So God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

All right, thanks, everybody.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Mr. President, how long are you going to keep U.S. troops in Poland and other NATO countries?

The President. Well, they'll be there for a long time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lonnie R. Stephenson, international president, and Alyssa Cruz, fourth-year apprentice and Local 134 member, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), who introduced the President.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Infrastructure workforce training efforts; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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